

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy in permitting me to speak on this issue.

I have heard my friends on the other side talk about marriage being under attack. Well, I think it probably is in many sectors. Marriages are under strain today in terms of economics. There are social cross-currents. We see failed marriages. But it is not under attack by our gay and lesbian citizens.

The gay and lesbian citizens I know in my community are dealing with the everyday stresses of their lives, which are actually more difficult than most Americans. They are struggling against discrimination in the workplace. They are struggling against discrimination and in some cases violence directed towards gay and lesbian citizens. And every day gay and lesbian couples in long-term committed relationships, sometimes involving children, have to struggle with the fact that they are not afforded the protections and the resources to be able to deal with the everyday challenges like health care emergencies. That is what they are dealing with. They are not assaulting my marriage or anybody else's. They are trying to deal with a difficult hand that has been dealt to them.

The good news is that we are seeing the changes that are going to make a difference in the long run. The good news is that younger Americans wonder what bizarre episode we are involved with here. They are not peddling discrimination and hate. They have a much more positive and healthy attitude towards their neighbors, their friends, their relations, who happen to be gay and lesbian. The good news is that the States are trying to figure out ways to handle it.

The bad news is that Congress is not part of the solution but is instead pandering politically in something that has already been killed in the other Chamber, that has no chance of passage; going through a ritual that is actually setting us back.

I am confident that in the long run truth and justice is going to prevail. We are not going to be having any assaults on any heterosexual marriages, but we will be dealing with how we are going to provide the necessary protections for our gay and lesbian citizens. That day, sadly, is not today.